

Taglines, Snaglines

by Katie Geddes

What Exactly is a Tagline?

A tagline is a few words or a short phrase (the shorter the better usually) that gets placed right after a company, product or service's name, adding to the impression delivered by the name alone.

Why Would You Want a Tagline?

Many marketers agree that the words you use are your single most valuable tool for attracting people to your business. Without the right language, your amazing offering may languish in obscurity. It pays to learn what makes a good tagline.

If you've got something you want to attract attention to -- a product, service, business or event -- a tagline is a great way to draw people in to what you've got.

Having created successful taglines for numerous companies ranging from billion-dollar manufacturers like Pratt & Whitney to loads of creative little guys for over 14 years, let me explain to you a few nuances involved in the creation of an effective tagline so you too can have a saucy little tagline of your very own.

What a Tagline ISN'T?

A tagline is NOT merely a description of your business, product or service. It may end up describing it but that's not its main intent. It can hint at it or it can say nothing about it (see examples below). Many newbies misunderstand this when they set about to create this little piece of prose to help sell their wares.

If you want to describe what you do, that's cool. But that's not a tagline. For instance, under the name of a business name I created called Luxe Redux (which creates new furniture from old pieces and

parts), we decided to add "art furniture & installations." That's a description of the business; it's NOT a tagline.

Definitely do learn to describe what you do clearly. This is the foundation for communicating your uniqueness. But that is also NOT a tagline. Understanding these differences is a key to your success.

A Few Favorite Famous Examples

Here are a couple famous examples that are some of my favorites.

"Just Do It" -- Nike

Most people are familiar with Nike's "Just Do It" tagline. This is a great tagline.

What's So Great About It?

It's motivating. It's no nonsense, like the idea of getting out there and exercising. It's only three words, which means it can be printed large in advertising, something you want to keep in mind if you're in business. It's easy to remember.

One of the interesting things about a tagline is that it can often be applied to any sort of business. "Just Do It" could mean "just go get your hair cut," "just take out the garbage," "just shut up" for that matter (no offense).

The point is -- a great tagline is actually NOT specific to a business -- or rather, it doesn't have to be.

What it does is it makes you FEEL something and pretty strongly. In this case, it makes you want to get moving. That's fantastically relevant for Nike's products.

"Think Different" -- Apple

Apple's "Think Different" campaign is justifiably revered.

What's So Great About It?

Apple's branding is repeatedly used to demonstrate good work. In the case of this tagline, what's noteworthy is that it says zilch about Apple being a technology or computer company. There's no mention of "we make great computers" or "reliable processors." It's all about who their customer is, which is someone who thinks outside the box.

Apple has never been afraid to cater to creative, original thinkers and they developed fiercely loyal customers as a result. Customers who were happy to buy music, phones and more from what started out as a computer company.

Think about it. With different marketing (and taglines), they could have had a hard time convincing people that a company who makes computers knows anything about music. We're now used to downloading music but Apple is a big part of what made that happen.

This stuff goes deep into the values of your business.

This tagline is only two words. That's a lot of clout from two little words.

How Helpful Can a Tagline Be?

"Discover the Art of Floorplay" -- Embodyware Rugs

This tagline is one I created for my own rug designs business called Embodyware.

Why It Works

To show how important and useful a good tagline can be, when I arrived at this tagline, it brought together the whole brand and marketing approach.

When I was first branding this business, I thought it would be tough to write in an interesting way about rugs. The rugs are luxurious, well made and gorgeously colored. But those are facts, descriptions. Not enough zing to really pull you in. Then I realized that my customer is playful and it started to come together.

I've got a specific process I go through to uncover the keys to a brand that I call Vision work. I identify your 3Ps -- your People, Path & Payoff. By asking probing questions, you get to the heart and soul of what motivates your business and its reason for being.

When I figured out that my customer was playful, I realized they'd love to get down on the luxurious rugs in their bare feet and play on the floor. Then my mischievous voice came up with using floorplay as a pun on foreplay and voila -- the whole essence of the company's personality was born.

"Play Yourself First" -- PlayFate Healing Through Play

Here's a tagline I created for a business focusing on how play and self-care enriches the lives of entrepreneurs.

Why It Works

This tagline plays off the phrase "pay yourself first." Right away, that's catchy. Secondly, it's a command, like Nike's "Just Do It." Sometimes people like to be bossed around a bit. Admit it. It's intentionally funny, a play on words, which is spot on for its audience. And it's kind of touching because it's admonishing you to take care of yourself, to pay attention to yourself. It's also reminding you to play, a key value of the business. That's a whole lotta goodness in three words.

"Find Your Peace" -- Peaceology Apparel

This tagline I wrote for a fashion line geared to peae-loving, bohemian luxury seekers. The word "peace" plays off the double meaning of the word "piece" used to refer to a garment.

Words are Art

The art of "Naming" is like the verbal equivalent of a logo. A lot goes into it. Simplicity rocks. As wise minds have noted, it takes a lot to get to "the simplicity on the other side of complexity." But it's worth it, grasshopper. You get brilliance, fun and customers out of it.

Tips for Your Own Cool Tagline

Here are just a few tips for writing your own great tagline.

Get Active

Try starting with a verb. Notice that 3 out of the 4 examples above start with a verb. Verbs imply action and that's good. It makes people feel like something's happening. It's not a hard and fast rule but it's worth noting.

Whittle it Down

Great taglines are short. Period. No more than 5 words, 7 maximum and often only 2 or 3. To get to that place, blurt out all your ideas and then edit. It goes better that way.

Own Your Silly, Sassy Self

Don't be so serious. You're allowed to have fun. When you bring silliness, light heartedness and a fun mood to this undertaking (like most of life), ideas will open up to you. Playfulness and creativity go hand in hand.

Mischievousness works magic. People cracking up is a great response to your tagline, almost no matter what your subject matter. You cracking up while you work is a great thing too.

Same goes for sassiness. Most of Erika's followers know a thing or two about sass. Don't be afraid to own your sass in your tagline. Break down barriers. Get into your sassy self and see what emerges.

Clever Versus Clear

I love a good pun. Puns rely on quick wittedness, a certain sense of humor and intelligence. Certain audiences won't "get" them. So know your audience when deciding whether to be witty.

Unlike a straight description of your business, a tagline can contain humor, misspellings that are funny and you can even make up words.

Mess around with clever or clear approaches and see what feels right for you; both can work well in a tagline.

Can You FEEL It?

Like moths to a flame, emotion pulls. I'm not sure if moths feel emotions. But we certainly do. And we know what it is to be "drawn into" something -- an idea, a color, a look and most of all: a feeling.

So here's the biggest tip of all: How does it make you "feel?"

One of the cardinal rules of marketing is that emotions drive us, that we buy based on our emotions, no matter how logical a person we are. Think about the decisions you've made in your life. It's not that you don't or can't evaluate a choice logically; it's that emotion wins out after you've evaluated things logically. When faced with two equal choices, the one you've got a bigger emotional response to will win.

Go Deeper for Pay Dirt

Emotions drive us. We're emotional beings. Make emotion work for you. Take a moment and feel some emotions. What stirs you up? What gets you excited in life?

For me, for example, color is a big motivating force. I can think about colors and get into all sorts of moods.

Music stirs many people. See what the emotions are that music you love is bringing up because you're not selling the music even if you're a musician. You're selling / talking about the emotions the music conjures up.

"A Delicious Musical Schmear " -- Om Shalom Band

The above is a tagline I wrote for a band whose music mixes East Indian and Israeli Klesmer traditions (and who also has a sense of humor).

Put emotion into your tagline and people will feel it. It could be daring energy, sweeping poignance, romanticism, adventure, rebellion, conquering victory, blazing artistry -- all sorts of things. That feeling will draw your ideal clients to you like moths to a flame.

Be Unique -- And Break Them Rules

And lastly, for frig's sake don't be afraid to be unique. Express who you really are.

Don't be afraid to be unique or even purrposely (major cat person here) mispell and use incorrect grammar.

I love language and grammar. I love knowing the difference between accept and except, its and it's. Grammar is a tool for clear communication. However, your tagline is one of the few places where you can go to town with "wrong" grammar. Don't do it mindlessly but if you come up with something fun or catchy that's incorrect grammar, it can be fun and catchy in a tagline.

Steal Like an Artist

Take inspiration from everyone and everything you love but don't copy them exactly. That's just boring. And disrespectful to someone you admire as well as to honoring your own unique brilliance. If it turns out that someone had your very close idea before you, let them have it and keep going till you uncover your own slant. There's no limit to creativity. You will NOT run out of ideas. Ever. (And if you feel you're in danger, you can call me.)

Taglines make people take notice and feel something. Quickly.

A tagline is a tiny piece of art. Art doesn't (I mean don't) follow rules - - even though I've given you a bunch that I hope may help you.

Use Colorful Language

If you'd like help finding your own colorful language and captivating tagline, you can find me ready to help at Embodiyart.org (katie@embodiyart.org). You ain't heard nuthin' yet.

Lovin Bytes,



Katie

Katie Geddes can be found geeking it up at Embodiyart.org, where she'll show you how to profit from your passion. Katie designs thriving businesses for playful, spiritual entrepreneurs. She provides design, copy and tech all together. E-mail Katie at katie@embodiyart.org to say hi, ask a question, sing a song or create your profitable business.